

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT



FOR RELEASE: August 4, 2016

CONTACT: Jennifer Rose
VOSH Safety Program Director
804-786-7776
jennifer.rose@doli.virginia.gov

SURGE IN VIRGINIA WORKPLACE FATALITIES IN 2016

RICHMOND, VA – Commissioner C. Ray Davenport urges greater employer and worker vigilance on occupational safety and health protections after 29 Virginia workers have died of job-related injuries and illnesses through the end of July, 2016. At the close of 2015, 31 employees were victim to workplace fatality – the same number as in 2014.

"In the month of July alone, eight Virginia workers have lost their lives in workplace accidents, devastating families, friends, co-workers and businesses", said Commissioner Davenport. "If this horrific trend in workplace deaths continues, Virginia will experience an 80% increase in fatal accidents investigated by the Virginia Occupational Safety and Health (VOSH) program in 2016".

After 29 preventable work-related deaths since January 1, 2016, the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry's VOSH program is urging Virginia employers to carefully review injury and illness prevention programs and their work place safety and health procedures with their employees to reduce this tragic trend.

More than half of all workplace fatalities in Virginia occurred in general industry (manufacturing, logging, etc.) in 2015. Construction companies totaled the most fatal accidents by industry in 2014. Construction industry deaths declined from 2014 to 2015, from 15 to 11 respectively. So far in 2016, nine of the 29 fatalities have occurred in the construction industry. The agricultural industry, including tree trimming operations, typically accounts for one percent (1%) of all the workplace fatalities in Virginia. Males consistently make up the majority of workplace victims. Of the 29 fatalities so far in 2016, VOSH's fatality investigations have included:

March 17: A 45 year old male was working on a second floor residential construction site when he stood on top of a plywood floor hole cover over a stairway opening. The plywood gave way and the

victim fell through the opening, receiving severe head trauma and a fractured spine. Falls make up approximately 20 percent of the 29 work related fatalities so far this year in Virginia. Falls were also the number one cause of workplace fatalities in Virginia in 2015. More information on fall protection issues can be found at: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/fallprotection/>.

March 29: A 22 year old male was struck by falling materials when a storage rack collapsed. Of Virginia's 26 fatalities this year, 11 of them have resulted from victims being struck by objects. Struck by injuries was the number one cause of workplace fatalities in 2014. More information on struck-by hazards can be found at: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/construction/struckby/mainpage.html>.

May 27: A 47 year old male was pinned under an overturned forklift. More information about forklift safety can be found at: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/powerindustrialtrucks/index.html>.

July 12: One female and one male performing flagging operations in a construction work zone were struck by a vehicle operating in reverse during paving operations. More information on reverse signal operation of vehicles and equipment can be found at: http://www.doli.virginia.gov/vosh_enforcement/reverse_signal.html.

Jul 21: A father and his son were electrocuted when the ladder they were moving contacted an overhead high voltage line. More information on overhead high voltage line safety requirements can be found at: <http://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodepopularnames/overhead-high-voltage-line-safety-act/>.

Immediate steps that can be taken by employers and workers to avoid workplace injuries and illnesses include:

- ✓ Conducting a safety and health "stand down" meeting and encourage discussion on recognizing and correcting hazards in the workplace.
 - ✓ Pledging to work together with front line employees as a team to make the workplace a safer, healthier and happier place to work.
 - ✓ Establishing and implementing a safety and health program for the work site with full employee involvement.
 - ✓ Encouraging accident prevention and the reporting of hazards and injuries in the workplace.
- Many times minor injuries go unreported and more severe injuries result later on as a result of an uncorrected hazard in the workplace.
- ✓ Increasing attention toward the safety of vulnerable workers such as temporary workers or those who are not fluent in English.

- ✓ VOSH offers free On-Site Consultation Services to help small businesses better understand and voluntarily comply with VOSH standards. Priority is given to high hazard workplaces with 250 or fewer employees. Additional information can be obtained by contacting the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry office closest to you at www.doli.virginia.gov or by contacting Warren Rice, Director of Cooperative Programs at (804) 786-6613 or warren.rice@doli.virginia.gov.

More information on INJURY AND ILLNESS PREVENT PROGRAMS can be found at:

<http://www.osha.gov/dsg/topics/safetyhealth/index.html>

More information on TRAINING for employees and employers can be found at:

<http://www.osha.gov/dte/index.html>

More information on HAZARD IDENTIFICATION can be found at:

<http://www.osha.gov/hazfinder/>

More information on assistance available to SMALL BUSINESSES can be found at:

<http://www.osha.gov/dcsp/smallbusiness/index.html>

The 25 MOST FREQUENTLY CITED STANDARDS for general industry and the construction industry can be found at http://www.doli.virginia.gov/vosh_enforcement/vosh_workplace_violations.html.

Information on BEST PRACTICES FOR PREVENTING FATALITIES AND SERIOUS INJURIES AND ILLNESESS can be found at http://www.doli.virginia.gov/vosh_enforcement/fatalities_intro.html.

More information on REPORTING workplace fatalities (within 8 hours) and severe work-related injuries - defined as a hospitalization, amputation or loss of an eye (within 24 hours) - can be found at: <http://www.osha.gov/report.html> (fatalities and severe injuries can also be reported through OSHA's toll-free hotline at 800-321-OSHA (6742), or a local VOSH regional office.

Workplace fatality victims are exposed to some of the most frequently cited OSHA hazards such as falls, struck-by, and electrocution. In Virginia, employers are required to follow all federal OSHA identical standards as well as State specific standards which are available at:

http://www.doli.virginia.gov/vosh_enforcement/vaunique_standards.html.

A MEDIA PACKET is available at

http://www.doli.virginia.gov/media_room/vosh_media_packet_files/VOSH%20Media%20Packet_FINAL_08.03.2016.pdf

To ask questions, obtain compliance assistance, or file a complaint, contact the VOSH Safety Program Director at jennifer.rose@doli.virginia.gov or 804-786-7776.

The Virginia Occupational Safety and Health (VOSH) program is financed with 50% federal funds and 50% state funds in the form of a grant from the U. S. Department of Labor – OSHA, under §23(g); 90% federal funds and 10% state funds under §21(d) for private sector consultation under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSH Act).

###